



Homeland Security

Frequently Asked Questions TOPOFF 4 - Arizona

1. What type of exercise will occur in Arizona? What is the difference between a functional and a full-scale exercise?

Arizona is conducting a functional exercise. A functional exercise focuses on the coordination of decision-making and communications during a simulated disaster. It is a functional assessment of planning and decision-making in a time of crisis that engages multiple agencies in policy decisions and communications over several days. Arizona is the first state to complete a functional TOPOFF exercise that will serve as a model for future TOPOFF exercises.

A full-scale exercise adds on-the-ground first response activities to test participants on a wide range of capabilities and task areas, including incident response, incident command, cross-jurisdictional coordination, risk communication and implementation of protocols and policies. Participants in both full-scale and functional exercises also exercise prevention and intelligence gathering functions.

2. How many and what kinds of agencies are participating in Arizona?

At least 23 state agencies, eight state commissions and organizations, 16 local governments, three counties and three tribal governments are participating in Arizona's exercise.

3. Who participates in TOPOFF? What top officials from Arizona are participating?

The exercise engages participants at all levels of government, from cabinet secretaries to governors, mayors and city managers; local fire, EMS, police and search-and-rescue personnel; law enforcement professionals; public health and public communications professionals; as well as members of the private sector.

Top officials from Arizona include Governor Janet Napolitano and key members of her cabinet and staff. Senior executives from participating governmental jurisdictions and private sector organizations also are expected to play.

4. What are Arizona's objectives for TOPOFF 4?

The state of Arizona has identified the following objectives for TOPOFF 4:

- **Incident Management:** Demonstrate interoperability of communications at the local, county, state and federal levels.
- **Intelligence Management:** Assess the homeland security intelligence distribution process used among federal, state and local authorities to prevent and deter a terrorist attack.
- **Public Messaging and Information:** Assess the public information flow process and the Arizona 211 Emergency Bulletin System during a terrorist attack.
- **Emergency Operations Plans:** Demonstrate the ability to direct and control emergency operations at the local, county and state Emergency Operations Centers.
- **Recovery:** Demonstrate the ability of local, county, state, tribal and federal agencies and the private sector to recover from a terrorist attack.
- **Effectiveness:** Demonstrate the ability to determine and implement protective action decisions at the local, county, state and federal levels.

Participating local, county and tribal jurisdictions and agencies have developed their own specific objectives that compliment the overall federal and state objectives.

5. What role does the private sector play in TOPOFF 4?

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) works through its Private Sector Office and Office of Infrastructure Protection to involve the private sector in the TOPOFF cycle of events. More than 5,000 members of the private sector community participated at various levels in TOPOFF 3.

Approximately 18 Arizona private sector companies and organizations as well as four volunteer agencies are participating.

6. How is TOPOFF 4 different from other exercises that have been held in Arizona?

Arizona jurisdictions regularly plan for and participate in statewide, regional and national exercises to practice and evaluate emergency preparedness, response and recovery capabilities. However, these exercises tend to be directed toward operational activities. TOPOFF 4, by definition, is a Top Officials exercise and seeks to engage executive decision makers at all levels of government, as well as in the private sector, in the strategic management of a terrorist incident.

7. What does it mean to “play” in the exercise? How is exercise play prompted and regulated?

“Play” describes how agencies and organizations act out their roles in response to the scenario. Players receive information from exercise controllers, based on a Master Scenario Event List. The list contains key events that trigger decisions and activities that exercise specific capabilities and achieve the exercise objectives.

8. How will participation in TOPOFF 4 affect Arizona’s preparedness?

The exercise will enable state and local agencies to identify and correct deficiencies in communications, equipment, interagency cooperation and procedures needed to handle emergencies of all kinds, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters, such as killer storms, earthquakes and wildfires, as well as failures of critical infrastructure (e.g., the collapse of a bridge).

The exercise will enable state and local governments to plan improvements in their respective capabilities in emergency response.

9. Is the exercise open to outside observation?

Because of the sensitive nature of the capabilities being exercised, TOPOFF 4 officials carefully manage external observation and information dissemination. Some international, federal, state, territorial and local officials and emergency response personnel received invitations to observe a portion of the exercise, which will help them understand how the nation is preparing to address terrorist threats and other kinds of public emergencies. Members of the news media may attend briefings during and after the exercise. Some law enforcement and intelligence components of the exercise are classified and will not be discussed in detail.

10. What happens if a real terrorist attack or a natural disaster occurs while the exercise is under way?

The exercise will halt immediately. No essential personnel will be diverted from any actual emergency response effort to respond to simulated events, nor will any ongoing preparedness or security effort be compromised.

11. What information will the public receive about exercise outcomes and lessons learned?

A formal evaluation of the exercise will occur at its conclusion. Agencies will apply the findings and lessons learned to ongoing efforts to improve national preparedness and security. Because of the need to maintain operational security and protect sensitive information about efforts to thwart terrorist activities, information released to the public must receive careful scrutiny. The Department of Homeland Security and its partner agencies will make every effort to inform the public without actually releasing information that could help terrorists or other criminals.

12. How are members of the public being made aware of exercise activities and any possible disruptions to normal activities in Arizona?

Because TOPOFF 4 is a functional exercise in Arizona, the public will experience little if any disruption to normal activities. If any disruptions are anticipated, local authorities will work with the news media to inform citizens about how this may affect them.

13. Who can I contact at the Department of Homeland Security for additional information?

Please contact DHS-FEMA Public Affairs Specialist Marlene Phillips if you have additional questions. She can be reached at marlene.phillips@dhs.gov or through the FEMA News Desk at (202) 646-4600.

14. Who can I contact in Arizona for additional information?

In Arizona, direct news media inquiries to Karen Ashley with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security, (602) 542-7006, or by email at kashley@azdohs.gov.